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CLIFTON CHAPEL AND OTHER SCHOOL POEMS

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HENRY NEWBOLT

CLIFTON CHAPEL
AND OTHER SCHOOL POEMS

BY
HENRY NEWBOLT

11

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BLH

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O STRENGTH DIVINE OF ROMAN DAYS,
O SPIRIT OF THE AGE OF FAITH,
GO WITH OUR SONS ON ALL THEIR WAYS,
WHEN WE LONG SINCE ARE DUST AND WRAITH.

CLIFTON CHAPEL

THIS is the Chapel : here, my son,
Your father thought the thoughts of
youth,
And heard the words that one by one
The touch of Life has turned to truth.
Here, in a day that is not far,
You too may speak with noble ghosts
Of manhood and the vows of war
You made before the Lord of Hosts.

To set the Cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize,
To honour, while you strike him down,
The foe that comes with fearless eyes :

To count the life of battle good,
And dear the land that gave you birth,
And dearer yet the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth—

My son, the oath is yours : the end
Is His, Who built the world of strife,
Who gave His children Pain for friend
And Death for surest hope of life.
To-day and here the fight's begun,
Of the great fellowship you're free ;
Henceforth the School and you are one,
And what you are, the race shall be.

God send you fortune : yet be sure,
Among the lights that gleam and pass,
You'll live to follow none more pure
Than that which glows on yonder brass :

"*Qui procul hinc,*" the legend's writ--

The frontier-grave is far away—

Qui ante diem periit :

Sed miles, sed pro patriâ."

VITAĬ LAMPADA

THERE'S a breathless hush in the Close to
night—

Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned
coat,

Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder
smote—

“ Play up ! play up ! and play the
game ! ”

The sand of the desert is sodden red—
Red with the wreck of a square that
broke ;—

The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel
dead,

And the regiment blind with dust and
smoke.

The river of death has brimmed his banks,

And England's far and Honour a name,

But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the
ranks :

"Play up! play up! and play the
game!"

This is the word that year by year,

While in her place the School is set,

Every one of her sons must hear,

And none that hears it dare forget.

This they all, with a joyful mind,

Bear through life like a torch in flame,

And falling fling to the host behind—

"Play up! play up! and play the
game!"

HE FELL AMONG THIEVES

“YE have robbed,” said he, “ye have
slaughtered and made an end ;

Take your ill-got plunder, and bury the
dead :

What will ye more of your guest and some-
time friend ? ”

“ Blood for our blood,” they said.

He laughed : “ If one may settle the score
for five

I am ready ; but let the reckoning stand
till day :

I have loved the sunlight as dearly as any
alive.”

“ You shall die at dawn,” said they.

HE FELL AMONG THIEVES 11

He flung his empty revolver down the slope,

He climbed alone to the eastward edge
of the trees ;

All night long in a dream untroubled of
hope

He brooded, clasping his knees.

He did not hear the monotonous roar that
fills

The ravine where the Yassîn river
sullenly flows ;

He did not see the starlight on the Laspur
hills,

Or the far Afghan snows.

He saw the April noon on his books aglow,

The wistaria trailing in at the window
wide ;

He heard his father's voice from the ter-
race below

Calling him down to ride.

12 HE FELL AMONG THIEVES

He saw the gray little church across the
park,

The mounds that hide the loved and
honoured dead ;

The Norman arch, the chancel softly dark,
The brasses black and red.

He saw the School Close, sunny and green,
The runner beside him, the stand by the
parapet wall,

The distant tape, and the crowd roaring
between,

His own name over all.

He saw the dark wainscot and timbered
roof,

The long tables, and the faces merry and
keen ;

The College Eight and their trainer dining
aloof,

The Dons on the dais serene.

HE FELL AMONG THIEVES 13

He watched the liner's stem ploughing the
foam,

He felt her trembling speed and the
thrash of her screw ;

He heard her passengers' voices talking of
home,

He saw the flag she flew.

And now it was dawn. He rose strong on
his feet,

And strode to his ruined camp below the
wood ;

He drank the breath of the morning cool
and sweet ;

His murderers round him stood.

Light on the Laspur hills was broadening
fast,

The blood-red snow-peaks chilled to
a dazzling white ;

14 HE FELL AMONG THIEVES

He turned, and saw the golden circle at
last,

Cut by the eastern height.

“ O glorious Life, Who dwellest in earth
and sun,

I have lived, I praise and adore Thee.”

A sword swept.

Over the pass the voices one by one

Faded, and the hill slept.

THE SCHOOL AT WAR

ALL night before the brink of death
In fitful sleep the army lay,
For through the dream that stilled their
breath
Too gauntly glared the coming day.

But we, within whose blood there leaps
The fullness of a life as wide
As Avon's water where he sweeps
Seaward at last with Severn's tide,

We heard beyond the desert night
The murmur of the fields we knew,
And our swift souls with one delight
Like homing swallows northward flew.

We played again the immortal games,
And grappled with the fierce old friends,
And cheered the dead undying names,
And sang the song that never ends ;

Till, when the hard, familiar bell
Told that the summer night was late,
Where long ago we said farewell
We said farewell by the old gate.

“ O Captains unforgot,” they cried,
“ Come you again or come no more,
Across the world you keep the pride,
Across the world we mark the score.”

THE VOLUNTEER

“ HE leapt to arms unbidden,
Unneeded, overbold ;
His face by earth is hidden,
His heart in earth is cold.

“ Curse on the reckless daring
That could not wait the call,
The proud fantastic bearing
That would be first to fall ! ”

O tears of human passion,
Blur not the image true ;
This was not folly's fashion,
This was the man we knew.

THE SCHOOLFELLOW

OUR game was his but yesteryear ;
We wished him back ; we could not
know
The selfsame hour we missed him here
He led the line that broke the foe.

Blood-red behind our guarded posts
Sank as of old the dying day ;
The battle ceased ; the mingled hosts
Weary and cheery went their way :

“ To-morrow well may bring,” we said,
“ As fair a fight, as clear a sun.”
Dear lad, before the word was sped,
For evermore thy goal was won.

ON SPION KOP

FOREMOST of all on battle's fiery steep
Here VERTUE¹ fell, and here he sleeps
his sleep.

A fairer name no Roman ever gave
To stand sole monument on Valour's
grave.

¹ Major N. H. Vertue, of the Buffs, Brigade-Major to General Woodgate, was buried where he fell, on the edge of Spion Kop, in front of the British position.

FOR A MEMORIAL

1899-1902

CLIFTON, remember these thy sons who fell
Fighting far over sea :
For they in a dark hour remembered well
Their warfare learned of thee.

THE NON-COMBATANT

AMONG a race high-handed, strong of
heart,

Sea-rovers, conquerors, builders in the
waste,

He had his birth ; a nature too complete,
Eager and doubtful, no man's soldier
sworn

And no man's chosen captain ; born to fail,
A name without an echo : yet he too

Within the cloister of his narrow days
Fulfilled the ancestral rites, and kept alive

The eternal fire ; it may be, not in vain :
For out of those who dropped a downward
glance

Upon the weakling huddled at his prayers,

Perchance some looked beyond him, and
then first

Beheld the glory, and what shrine it filled,
And to what Spirit sacred : or perchance
Some heard him chanting, though but to
himself,

The old heroic names : and went their
way,

And hummed his music on the march to
death.

.

COMMEMORATION

I SAT by the granite pillar, and sunlight
fell

Where the sunlight fell of old,
And the hour was the hour my heart
remembered well,

And the sermon rolled and rolled
As it used to roll when the place was still
unhaunted,
And the strangest tale in the world was
still untold.

And I knew that of all this rushing of
urgent sound
That I so clearly heard,

The green young forest of saplings
clustered round

Was heeding not one word :

Their heads were bowed in a still serried
patience

Such as an angel's breath could never
have stirred.

For some were already away to the
hazardous pitch,

Or lining the parapet wall,

And some were in glorious battle, or
great and rich,

Or throned in a college hall :

And among the rest was one like my own
young phantom,

Dreaming for ever beyond my utmost call.

“O Youth,” the preacher was crying,
“deem not thou

Thy life is thine alone ;

Thou bearest the will of the ages, seeing
how

They built thee bone by bone,
And within thy blood the Great Age
sleeps sepulchred
Till thou and thine shall roll away the stone.

“Therefore the days are coming when
thou shalt burn

With passion whitely hot ;
Rest shall be rest no more ; thy feet shall
spurn

All that thy hand hath got ;
And One that is stronger shall gird thee,
and lead thee swiftly
Whither, O heart of Youth, thou wouldest
not.”

And the School passed : and I saw the
living and dead
Set in their seats again,

And I longed to hear them speak of the
word that was said,

But I knew that I longed in vain.

And they stretched forth their hands, and
the wind of the spirit took them

Lightly as drifted leaves on an endless
plain.

THE ECHO

OF A BALLAD SUNG BY HARRY PLUNKET GREENE

TO HIS OLD SCHOOL

*" . . . seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever."*

TWICE three hundred boys were we,

Long ago, long ago,

Where the Downs look out to the Severn
Sea.

Clifton for aye !

We held by the game and hailed the team,
For many could play where few could
dream.

City of Song shall stand alway.

Some were for profit and some for pride,

Long ago, long ago,

Some for the flag they lived and died.

Clifton for aye !

The work of the world must still be done,
And minds are many though truth be one.

City of Song shall stand alway.

But a lad there was to his fellows sang,

Long ago, long ago,

And soon the world to his music rang.

Clifton for aye !

Follow your Captains, crown your Kings,

But what will ye give to the lad that sings ?

City of Song shall stand alway.

For the voice ye hear is the voice of home,

Long ago, long ago,

And the voice of Youth with the world to
roam.

Clifton for aye !

The voice of passion and human tears,

And the voice of the vision that lights the
years.

City of Song shall stand alway.

THE BEST SCHOOL OF ALL

IT'S good to see the School we knew,
The land of youth and dream,
To greet again the rule we knew
Before we took the stream :
Though long we've missed the sight of her,
Our hearts may not forget ;
We've lost the old delight of her,
We keep her honour yet.

*We'll honour yet the School we knew,
The best School of all :
We'll honour yet the rule we knew,
Till the last bell call.
For, working days or holidays,
And glad or melancholy days,
They were great days and jolly days
At the best School of all.*

The stars and sounding vanities
That half the crowd bewitch,
What are they but inanities
To him that treads the pitch?
And where's the wealth, I'm wondering,
Could buy the cheers that roll
When the last charge goes thundering
Beneath the twilight goal?

The men that tanned the hide of us,
Our daily foes and friends,
They shall not lose their pride of us
Howe'er the journey ends.
Their voice, to us who sing of it,
No more its message bears,
But the round world shall ring of it,
And all we are be theirs.

To speak of Fame a venture is,
There's little here can bide ;
But we may face the centuries,
And dare the deepening tide :

For though the dust that's part of us
To dust again be gone,
Yet here shall beat the heart of us—
The School we handed on !

We'll honour yet the School we knew.

The best School of all :

We'll honour yet the rule we knew,

Till the last bell call.

For, working days or holidays,

And glad or melancholy days,

They were great days and jolly days

At the best School of all.

EPISTLE

TO COLONEL FRANCIS EDWARD YOUNGHUSBAND

ACROSS the Western World, the Arabian
Sea,
The Hundred Kingdoms and the Rivers
Three,
Beyond the rampart of Himálayan snows,
And up the road that only Rumour knows,
Unchecked, old friend, from Devon to
Thibet,
Friendship and Memory dog your foot-
steps yet.

Let not the scornful ask me what avails
So small a pack to follow mighty trails :
Long since I saw what difference must be
Between a stream like you, a ditch like me.

This drains a garden and a homely field
Which scarce at times a living current
yield ;

The other from the high lands of his birth
Plunges through rocks and spurns the
pastoral earth,

Then, settling silent to his deeper course,
Draws in his fellows to augment his force,
Becomes a name, and broadening as he
goes,

Gives power and purity where'er he flows,
Till, great enough for any commerce
grown,

He links all nations while he serves his
own.

Soldier, explorer, statesman, what in truth
Have you in common with homekeeping
youth ?

" Youth," comes your answer like an echo
faint ;

And youth it was that made us first
acquaint.

Do you remember when the Downs were
white

With the March dust from highways
glaring bright,

How you and I, like yachts that toss
the foam,

From Penpole Fields came stride and
stride for home?

One grimly leading, one intent to pass,
Mile after mile we measured road and
grass,

Twin silent shadows, till the hour was
done,

The shadows parted, and the stouter
won.

Since then I know one thing beyond
appeal—

How runs from stem to stern a trim-built
keel.

Another day—but that's not mine to tell,
The man in front does not observe so
well ;

Though, spite of all these five-and-twenty
years,

As clear as life our schoolday scene
appears.

The guarded course, the barriers and the
rope ;

The runners, stripped of all but shivering
hope ;

The starter's good grey head ; the sudden
hush ;

The stern white line ; the half-unconscious
rush ;

The deadly bend, the pivot of our fate ;

The rope again ; the long green level
straight ;

The lane of heads, the cheering half-
unheard,

The dying spurt, the tape, the judge's
word.

You, too, I doubt not, from your Lama's
hall

Can see the Stand above the worn old wall,
Where then they clamoured as our race we
sped,

Where now they number our heroic dead.

As clear as life you, too, can hear the sound
Of voices once for all by "lock-up" bound,
And see the flash of eyes still nobly bright,
But in the "Bigside scrimmage" lost to
sight.

Old loves, old rivalries, old happy times,
These well may move your memory and
my rhymes ;

These are the Past ; but there is that, my
friend,

Between us two, that has nor time nor end.
Though wide apart the lines our fate has
traced

Since those far shadows of our boyhood
raced,

In the dim region all men must explore—
The mind's Thibet, where none has gone
before—

Rounding some shoulder of the lonely trail
We met once more, and raised a lusty hail.

“Forward!” cried one, “for us no beaten
track,

No city continuing, no turning back ;
The past we love not for its being past,
But for its hope and ardour forward cast :
The victories of our youth we count for
gain

Only because they steeled our hearts to
pain,

And hold no longer even Clifton great
Save as she schooled our wills to serve the
State.

“Nay, England’s self, whose thousand-
year-old name

Burns in our blood like ever-smouldering
flame,

Whose Titan shoulders as the world are
wide

And her great pulses like the Ocean tide,
Lives but to bear the hopes we shall not
see—

Dear mortal Mother of the race to be.”

Thereto you answered, “Forward ! in God’s
name :

I own no lesser law, no narrower claim.

A freeman’s Reason well might think it
scorn

To toil for those who may be never born,
But for some Cause not wholly out of ken,
Some all-directing Will that works with
men

Some Universal under which may fall
The minor premiss of our effort small ;
In Whose unending purpose, though we
 cease,
We find our impulse and our only peace."

So passed our greeting, till we turned once
 more,
I to my desk and you to rule Indore.
To meet again—ah ! when ? Yet once we
 met,
And to one dawn our faces still are set.

NOTES

THIS collection is published at the request of the Headmaster of Clifton. It contains one piece—the Epistle to Younghusband—which has not yet appeared in book form : the remaining poems are taken from *The Island Race* and *The Sailing of the Long-Ships*.

Page 10. “He Fell among Thieves” is in substance the story of the death of Hayward, the traveller, as told in the Younghusbands’ *Chitral*.

Page 20. “Their warfare.” Isaiah xl. 2.

Page 27. In this “Echo” as hitherto published the third refrain of the original ballad was retained in each verse without alteration. To those who had heard it sung, its meaning could hardly have been doubtful : but by others it was found obscure ; and at the urgent suggestion of a member of the School (IV β) a plainer version is now substituted.

Page 32. “From Devon to Thibet.” This Epistle was written near Exeter, September 10, 1904, and sent to Col. Younghusband, then in Lhasa.

Page 34. The Short Penpole, March 16, 1878.

Page 35. The Old Cliftonians’ Race, March 1882.

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